

IN THE CLAIMS:

91 1. (Currently Amended) In a telecommunication system having a plurality of telephonic devices for initiating and receiving telephone calls, and an automated intelligent network (IN) for the automated processing of telephone calls in said telecommunication system, said IN including a service control point (SCP) comprising call handling control logic and an SCP database for storing information used for call handling, and a plurality of switches coupled to telephone devices for routing calls to the telephonic devices, a method of providing to a subscriber, an audio message converted from an electronic text message, said method comprising the steps of:

~~providing a plurality of telephonic devices for initiating and receiving telephone calls;~~

~~providing an automated intelligent network (IN) for the automated processing of telephone calls in said telecommunication system, said IN comprising a service control point (SCP) comprising control logic and an SCP database, and said IN comprising a plurality of switches coupled to telephone devices;~~

~~via said switches, routing calls authorized by said SCP to a destination number specified by a calling party;~~

~~via said IN and said SCP, receiving via the SCP an arbitrary electronic mail (e-mail) text message from a sending party specifying a subscriber as thean intended recipient of said e-mail message;~~

~~terminating a telephone call generated by said IN to a telephone number specified by said subscriber in said SCP database;~~

comparing information in said text message received by said SCP to handling instructions stored in said SCP database for the subscriber; and,

based upon said comparing:

converting text in said ~~e-mail~~text message to an audio message;-

establishing a telephone call to a telephone number designated by the subscriber; and,

transmitting during said a telephone call, an outgoing message comprising said audio message during said telephone call.

2. (Cancelled)

91 3. (Currently Amended) The telecommunication method in Claim 2 1, wherein said handling instructions are customizable by the subscribers and comprise the subscriber's e-mail address, the subscriber's designated telephone number for receiving said audio messages, and the subscriber's e-mail truncation instructions.

4. (Currently Amended) The telecommunication method in Claim 3, wherein the transmitted e-mail message is truncated according to said truncation instructions specified by the subscribers.

5. (Original) The telecommunication method in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

determining whether said subscriber also subscribes to a Caller Identification (Caller ID) service; and

transmitting to the telephone number, Caller ID information comprising and indication that a telephone call received by the subscriber contains an e-mail message.

6. (Original) The telecommunication method in Claim 5, wherein said Caller ID information further comprises the identity of the e-mail sending party.

7. (Original) The telecommunication method in Claim 5, wherein said Caller ID information further comprises a subject matter identifier of the e-mail message.

8. (Original) The telecommunication method in Claim 5, wherein said Caller ID information further comprises a portion of the text of said e-mail message.

9. (Original) The telecommunication method in Claim 1, wherein said terminating step includes sending a distinctive ringing pattern corresponding the inclusion of an e-mail message in said telephone call.

10. (Original) The telecommunication method in Claim 3, wherein said e-mail message is not transmitted to a subscriber unless header information in the email message indicates that the message is urgent.

91 11. (Original) The telecommunication method in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

prompting a subscriber to enter a code corresponding to instructing said telecommunication system to store said audio message in a voice mailbox; and

storing said audio message in a voice mailbox upon receiving said code.

12. (Original) The telecommunication method in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

prompting a subscriber to enter a code corresponding to instructing said telecommunication system to repeat the playing of said audio message; and

repeating the playing of said audio message upon receiving said code.

13. (Currently Amended) A telecommunication system adapted to provide to a subscriber, an audio message converted from an electronic text message, said system comprising:

a plurality of telephonic devices adapted to initiate and receive telephone calls;

an automated intelligent network (IN) adapted to automatically process telephone calls in said

telecommunication system, said IN comprising a service control point (SCP) comprising call handling control logic and an SCP database for storing information needed in call handling, and said IN comprising a plurality of switches coupled to ~~telephone~~ telephonic devices for receiving and routing calls; and

a text-to-audio converter adapted to convert text in an arbitrary electronic mail (e-mail) message to an audio message;

wherein said switches are adapted to route calls authorized by said SCP to a destination number specified by a ~~calling party~~ subscriber;

91 wherein said IN and SCP are adapted to receive an arbitrary e-mail message from a sending party specifying a subscriber as the intended recipient of said e-mail message; ~~and~~

wherein said SCP is further adapted to compare header information in said e-mail message received by said SCP to e-mail handling instructions stored in said SCP database, and route said e-mail message to the telephone number specified by the intended subscriber when said handling instructions so indicate; and

wherein said IN is adapted to generate and terminate a telephone call to a telephone number specified by said subscriber in said SCP database, and to cause to be transmitted during said telephone call, an outgoing message comprising said audio message.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently Amended) The telecommunication system in Claim ~~14~~ 13, wherein said handling instructions are customizable by the subscribers and comprise the subscriber's e-mail address, the subscriber's designated telephone number for receiving said audio message, and the subscriber's e-mail truncation instructions.

16. (Currently Amended) The telecommunication system in Claim 15, wherein the trans-

mitted e-mail message is truncated according to said truncation instructions specified by subscribers.

17. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said SCP is further adapted to determining whether said subscriber also subscribes to a Caller Identification (Caller ID) service, and transmit to the telephone number, Caller ID information comprising and indication that a telephone call received by the subscriber contains an e-mail message.

18. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 17, wherein said Caller ID information further comprises the identity of the e-mail sending party.

91 19. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 17, wherein said Caller ID information further comprises a subject matter identifier of the email message.

20. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 17, wherein said Caller ID information further comprises a portion of the text of said e-mail message.

21. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said SCP is further adapted to send a distinctive ringing pattern corresponding the inclusion of an e-mail message in said telephone call.

22. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 15, wherein said SCP is adapted to withhold the transmission of said e-mail message to a subscriber unless header information in the e-mail message indicates that the message is urgent.

23. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 13, further comprising
an intelligent peripheral adapted to prompt a subscriber to enter a code corresponding to
instructing said telecommunication system to store said audio message in a voice mailbox; and
a voice mailbox adapted to store audio messages, including audio email messages upon
receiving said code.

24. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 13, further comprising an

intelligent peripheral adapted to prompt a subscriber to enter a code corresponding to instructing said telecommunication system to repeat the playing of said audio message; and

a voice mailbox adapted to store audio messages, including audio email messages upon receiving said code.

91 25. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said text-to-audio converter and the function of transmitting said outgoing message are subsumed by an intelligent peripheral integrated into a switch.

26. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said text-to-audio converter and the function of transmitting said outgoing message are subsumed by a stand-alone intelligent peripheral.

27. (Original) The telecommunication system in Claim 13, wherein said text-to-audio converter and the function of transmitting said outgoing message are subsumed by an intelligent peripheral integrated into a Service Node (SN).